

## Seniors—keep on smiling!

Here are some things to keep in mind to help you maintain a healthy smile as you grow older:

- Because dental decay is still common among older adults, it is especially important to brush at least twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste, particularly at bedtime.
- Some medications or medical conditions can cause dry mouth as a result of a lack of saliva. Saliva has anti-bacterial properties and helps protect against tooth decay. Drinking water, chewing sugarless gum, and sucking on sugarless candy can help restore moisture. A dentist can also recommend mouth rinses or artificial saliva.
- The incidence of gum disease (periodontitis) is greater among older adults; symptoms may include bleeding, tender or swollen gums, loose teeth, and bad breath. Regular flossing, combined with daily brushing, can help minimize or prevent this from happening.
- Receding gums can result in the root of the tooth being exposed and susceptible to decay. Using fluoride toothpaste and mouthrinses can help prevent or reduce cavities on root surfaces.
- The use of tobacco and alcohol can cause tooth-related problems, mask gum inflammation, and increase the risk of developing oral cancer. It's never too late to quit and reduce these risks.

**A daily effort to keep your mouth clean, combined with regular dental visits, can help keep your healthy smile.**



Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/publications/factsheets/adult\\_older.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/publications/factsheets/adult_older.htm), accessed March 2010.

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